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## Secretary Rice asks NGOs to “Shine a Light” on Human Rights Problems

Secretary Rice met with 20 representatives of democracy, human rights and faith-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) at the State Department on June 14, 2005 to discuss policies and programs in the context of the President’s freedom agenda. The Secretary told the group that democracy and human rights, while distinct, reinforce each other. She also talked about the many extraordinary developments in democracy and human rights currently taking place around the world. She noted that the Department seeks new tools to supplement the annual Human Rights and Trafficking in Person Reports that catalog human rights abuses, and also discussed efforts to increase respect for civil society worldwide.

The Secretary cited instances of citizens in emerging democracies who are fearful and in need of support. In these cases, NGOs often play vital roles in helping such individuals build a more stable, safe, and free society. Secretary Rice praised the NGOs for the important work they



Under Secretary Dobriansky (left), Secretary Rice (right)

do, in often dangerous circumstances, to help improve the lives of others.

NGO representatives discussed major challenges and strategies to address problems in Darfur and Uzbekistan, and opportunities for democracy-building in Russia. Secretary Rice mentioned the difficult environment for democracy in Venezuela and the human rights situation in North Korea, where malnutrition and hunger are common. She asked the NGOs to “shine a light” on North Korea, affirming that “you can accomplish things through your efforts that we cannot.”

## A New Era for Democracy and Human Rights



A/AS Glyn Davies

The Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor (DRL) strives to promote democracy and expand respect for human rights, worker rights and religious freedom. From fighting against violence aimed at women in Pakistan to supporting educational projects in Bolivia, we implement the President’s freedom agenda.

As Acting Assistant Secretary, I believe the time is right to highlight the bureau’s work, to report on our progress

on a more regular basis, and to reach out to our many partners and friends in this vital endeavor.

I am pleased that President Bush has named Barry Lowenkron, now Deputy Director of Policy Planning at the State Department, to be the next Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Senate willing, he will start in his new position in the fall, and will continue this very important work.

In this inaugural issue of the DRL Newsletter, we focus on the story of one woman, Mukhtar Mai, who refused to allow the courts or tribal custom let the

perpetrators of violence go free. In future issues of our monthly newsletter, we will highlight other individuals and DRL programs. We also will bring you the latest news of what DRL is doing in Congress and with nongovernmental organizations.

We look forward to bringing you updates on how human rights heroes and democracy projects are making an impact around the world.

Sincerely,  
  
Glyn Davies

## Human Rights Defender: Mukhtar Mai

In each edition of this newsletter, DRL will highlight an individual who has displayed great courage in fighting against injustice and for human rights and democracy. In this inaugural issue, we honor Mukhtar Mai for her bravery and fortitude in calling for justice in the face of violence and for her noble stand on behalf of women's rights.

In February 2002, Mukhtar Mai, a village woman in rural Punjab, Pakistan, was the victim of a gang rape. Because of a perceived insult to the honor of another clan by her brother, a village council had ordered that she be gang raped as a way to punish her family.

In a society where women who are victims of rape rarely confront their attackers and often commit suicide out of shame, Mukhtar Mai persisted in having the local prosecutor bring charges against her attackers and has pursued the case to the highest court in Pakistan. The remarkable strength and courage of Ms. Mai has generated intense domestic and international support and attention.

Ms. Mai's efforts to bring those responsible to justice continue. In June 2002, government prosecutors filed charges on her behalf against fourteen men. Their trial resulted in conviction and sentencing to death of six and acquittal for eight. The case has been in appeal since then, with all the accused remaining in custody.

In March 2005, the Lahore High Court reversed the initial trial court's judgment, acquitting five of the six convicted men and reducing the sentence of the sixth. In late June 2005,

Pakistan's Supreme Court announced it would be the final court of appeal for the case and said that it would review the High Court's decision to overturn the original convictions.

While Ms. Mai has sought justice on her own behalf, she has also shown concern and empathy for her fellow villagers by attempting to change the atti-



Pakistani rape victim Mukhtar Mai listens to a question during a press conference in Islamabad, Pakistan on Tuesday, June 14, 2005. Mai earned renown after she defied a culture of shame that often surrounds rape victims by going public over her June 2002 assault.

tudes that led to her attack. Unselfishly using the compensation provided to her by the government, and donations she has received from different organizations around the world, Ms. Mai has pro-

vided her village with its first two schools. She has said that if her fellow villagers had been better educated, they would not have participated in the attack on her. She has underlined that point and demonstrated her generosity by assuring that children of her attackers are enrolled in the schools.

In June, when Ms. Mai was invited to the United States to talk to Pakistani Americans, the Pakistani government initially blocked her travel because of concerns that her story would be an embarrassment. The decision was reversed after public criticism, both domestic and international, convinced the Pakistani government that Ms. Mai's right to travel should not be constrained. President Musharraf has also suggested that Pakistan host an international conference on abuse of women. Ms. Mai has decided to remain in Pakistan while court action continues, but she did address a conference of Pakistani American Physicians in Houston by telephone.

The State Department has worked at length on behalf of Ms. Mai and has supported her pursuit of justice and her right to travel wherever and whenever she wants. Senior Department officials have said that she is welcome to visit the United States at any time.

In her own words, Mukhtar Mai's desires are simple: justice, understanding and moderation, so that the crime committed against her is not repeated. Her unrelenting fight for these goals is an inspiring story of personal courage. It has stirred the hearts of many in her native country and around the world. It poignantly demonstrates what one person can accomplish.

## Annual International Religious Freedom Report Due in September

In the coming month, Secretary of State Rice will submit to Congress the 7th Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, which describes the status of religious freedom in 197 countries and territories around the world. The report, which will cover the 12 months between July 1, 2004 and June

30, 2005, is submitted in compliance with the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

It is produced by U.S. embassies and the Office of International Religious Freedom. The report is based on information from a variety of sources, including government and religious

officials, nongovernmental organizations, journalists, human rights monitors, religious groups, and academics. The report serves as a basis for actions by Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom John Hanford and by other U.S. Government officials to advance freedom of religion abroad.



# DRL and CARE Partner to Empower Indigenous People

In Bolivia indigenous peoples comprise the majority of the population but are overwhelmingly excluded from social, economic and political life. This exclusion is one factor prompting Bolivia's social upheaval, political problems, and economic crisis.

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor is attempting to empower rural and indigenous people in Bolivia by funding a training project implemented by CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere). The project seeks to improve their participation and representation in the country's political process by teaching community leaders about human rights and Bolivian law. The goal is to encourage the leaders to participate in a "Constituent Assembly" to examine and revise the Bolivian Constitution, and to provide them with the necessary tools to better understand and defend their rights.

DRL officer Catherine Newling visited the project in April 2005. Traveling over winding mountain roads to the remote town of Potosí, Ms. Newling visited one

of CARE's training workshop locations, where indigenous leaders gathered to offer their perspective of the training. Many wore the traditional, hand-embroidered garb identifying them as ethnically Aymara, Guaraní, or Quechua, and shifted back and forth between Spanish and their indigenous languages as they spoke about their experiences and the need for continued training.

"This is a new concept for our communities because we didn't know what our rights were. We were humiliated, ignored," said one indigenous leader from the Puna municipality. "We as leaders are like a seed that needs to create a tree. We have to do something practical, not just theoretical. This project has been the only means for us to learn about our rights."

As a result of the training, participants have identified the need to investigate the plight of enslaved Guaraní families in the Chaco region of the Department of Chuquisaca, and ties have been established with the Ministry of Justice to coordinate action to defend

human rights. Inter-institutional coordination has been established by signing cooperative agreements between peasant and indigenous organizations and human rights institutions.



Indigenous leaders from the Aymara, Quechua, and Guaraní ethnic groups describe their experiences as recipients of CARE-Bolivia's human rights training at CARE's offices in Sucre

## Results of Bolivia Project

Facilitators trained .....	87
Municipal leaders trained .....	77
Human rights law trainees .....	2,000
Community leaders in Chuquisaca	
Department participating	
in training workshops on the	
Constitutional Assembly .....	459

## Election Corner

### ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

September: Presidential Election  
October/November: Parliamentary Elections

As Egypt prepares for its electoral season this fall, the U.S. Government is focusing on the importance of peace, stability, and Egypt's potential for advancing political reform in the Middle East. September's presidential election will allow some registered, legally-operating political parties to field a candidate for the first time. Rules for independent candidates are much stricter.

The United States is spending approximately \$6 million to assist with election monitoring, voter education and turnout, political party strengthening, and journalist training. The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor is participating in a working group focused on the Egyptian elections. It supports the Egyptian people in their desire for a free and fair electoral process that gives them a greater voice in their own government.

### REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

November: Parliamentary Elections

Democratization is one of the core U.S. interests in Azerbaijan. The U.S. is urging the Government of Azerbaijan to conduct parliamentary elections this November that meet international standards. It is also calling on the opposition parties to participate fully and non-violently through professional, issue-driven campaigns. The U.S. government is providing approximately \$3.6 million in non-partisan election assistance.

Under Secretary for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky traveled to Azerbaijan in late July to stress the importance of holding democratic elections. DRL is working closely with USAID on these elections.

### REPUBLIC OF HAITI

November: Presidential Election  
And Parliamentary Elections

With Haiti's upcoming elections set for November 13th, the U.S. is working closely with our international partners to safeguard the electoral process in Haiti. Successful elections in Haiti depend on providing adequate security to ensure effective registration, campaigning, and voting.

In preparation for local elections in October and national elections in November, DRL obligated \$1.5 million in a joint venture among the International Republican Institute (IRI), the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to strengthen and support political parties, voter education, and political polling.

## Looking Ahead: Upcoming Elections

### September

**Pakistan:** Local  
**Egypt:** Presidential  
**Afghanistan:** National Assembly and Provincial Council

### October

**Liberia:** Presidential and Parliamentary  
**Cote d'Ivoire:** Presidential  
**Tanzania:** Presidential and Parliamentary  
**Iraq:** Constitutional Referendum  
**Egypt:** Parliamentary

### November

**Azerbaijan:** Parliamentary  
**Haiti:** Presidential and Parliamentary  
**Chechnya:** Parliamentary

### December

**Iraq:** Parliamentary  
**Venezuela:** Parliamentary  
**Bolivia:** Parliamentary  
**Kazakhstan:** Presidential

# State Department Urges China to Allow Falun Gong Basic Rights

**T**he Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor (DRL) called on China to honor its international commitments and its own constitution in respecting religious freedom before the House International Relations Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations at a hearing entitled, "Falun Gong and China's Continuing War on Human Rights."

The Department urged China to travel the path to human rights and political liberty at the hearing July 21. DRL called for Falun Gong practitioners to be accorded their basic rights to freedom of belief, conscience and assembly.

The State Department continues to designate China as a Country of Particular Concern for its severe violations of religious freedom.

DRL is supporting activities in China to address some of its systemic problems,



**A man's bag and glasses go flying as a policeman (right) catches up with him after chasing him through Beijing's Tiananmen Square**

including reforming the judicial system, improving public participation, and strengthening civil society.

In 2006, DRL will place priority on funding capacity-building projects for NGOs, human rights awareness for rural residents, labor rights protection for migrant workers and training to strengthen public participation in governance. DRL will also continue to promote China's compliance with international labor standards.

The calling of our country is to advance freedom, support the allies of liberty everywhere, and help others create the kind of society that protects the rights of the individual and thus promotes the common good. China is no exception to these goals.

For more information: See the DRL web page at [www.state.gov/g/drl](http://www.state.gov/g/drl). For human rights conditions in China, go to [www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt). The full text is available on the DRL web page.

## DRL TO PARTICIPATE IN THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

DRL will participate in the UN General Assembly from September 11-23, and in the UNGA Third Committee segment on human rights from October 23 to November 24. A few of the Bureau's main areas of interest at the fall session of the UNGA are the creation of a Human Rights Council, and the state of human rights in Iran, Burma, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The U.S. will also forward initiatives on elections and democracy promotion.

## COMMITTEE ON DISABILITIES

The State Department convened its first meeting of the Advisory Committee on Persons with Disabilities on August 15, 2005. The committee was established for the purpose of advising the Secretary of State and the Administrator of USAID on matters pertaining to persons with disabilities, and in formulating and implementing U.S. foreign policy and assistance. Members of the committee represent private industry, advocacy groups, and government.

## DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE

In keeping with the priority the President and Secretary of State are according democracy promotion, the State Department will hold its second Democracy and Human Rights Officers' conference September 26 and 27. This conference will provide an opportunity for field-based officers to hear policy guidance from senior administration officials and to share best practices for promoting democracy and human rights.

**For comments or questions, contact the  
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